

I Once Was Blind, But Now I See

December 17, 2008

(Burial of the Dead - Amy Mann)

John 9: 1-15, 25b

St. Alban's Episcopal Church, Waco, Texas

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In the last few days, I have sat in silence and prayed and contemplated about Amy Mann and what she has meant to me and what she has meant to hundreds and hundreds of other people.

And I am humbled and honored to officiate at this service today - because Amy's life was a sermon in itself.

I have heard several people comment about how glad they are that Amy is now in heaven,

And about all the wonderful people and things that she can now see perfectly.

Although I certainly do agree with these comments,

And although I certainly do believe that Amy is now healed and is being clothed with a resurrected and healthy body,

I believe that we need to remember that Amy did not need 20/20 vision to be able to see just fine.

I remember how Amy would comment quite regularly on Sundays about how the flowers on the altar here at church looked beautiful.

And Amy was right:

The altar flowers *did* look beautiful.

Amy would tell us on crisp, cool, fall mornings that the leaves looked so wonderful in all their colors.

And Amy was right:

The fall leaves *did* look wonderful.

And Amy would tell me at the church door on Sundays that I was a good-looking guy.

And Amy was right:

I *am* a good-looking guy.

Amy did not see us with her eyes.
Yet Amy saw us - as Jesus sees us.

For to Amy, we are all beautiful and wonderful and good-looking.
To Amy, we are all her best friends.
To Amy, we all are God's beloved sons and daughters.

Amy did not need healthy eyes to see us in the ways that God sees us.
Amy Mann was blind.
But Amy could see us, just fine.

In the scripture reading from the Gospel of John, we just heard a story.
We heard the story of Jesus healing the blind man.
In this story, Jesus tells us that he is the light of the world.
Then, Jesus spits on the ground, makes mud with his saliva and then puts
this muddy paste on the blind man's eyes.
Jesus then tells the blind man to go and wash his eyes in the pool of
Siloam,
And then the blind man is healed and can see.

The religious leaders cannot believe this miracle.
So they question and badger the man that used to be blind.
Finally, the man just states the facts:
"Jesus put mud on my eyes.
Then I washed in the pool of Siloam.
For one thing I do know -
I once was blind, but now I see."

In the Good News of Jesus Christ, what the church calls the Gospels,
We hear about a vision of God's world, a world where everything is
turned upside-down.

In God's upside-down world, the hungry are filled, and the mighty are
cast down from their thrones.
In God's world, the first will be last, and the last will be first.
In God's world, the blind can see and those with perfect eye-sight are
left groping in the dark.
For in God's upside-down world, the blind *do* see, just fine.

Sunday after Sunday, I preach in this church about this Good News of God's upside-down world.

And Sunday after Sunday, Amy Mann would sit in that pew and she would smile from ear to ear as I preached about God's wacky dream of a world in reverse order,

Because Amy saw God's dream more clearly, I believe, than most anyone I know.

Amy did not see God through a glass darkly.

Amy saw God in her darkness - and it made her smile, from ear to ear.

You see, Amy Mann could see God just fine.

A member of our church recently asked me a question.

He asked me:

"Jeff, how do you teach someone about the concept of sacrifice?"

My answer is this:

You cannot *teach* anyone about sacrifice.

You have to *show* them sacrifice.

And this is exactly what God has done for us in Jesus Christ.

God tried and tried to tell us about sacrifice and real love.

But, you can't just *tell* folks about sacrifice.

You have to *show* them sacrifice.

So, God became one of us.

He was born to a human mother, just like us.

He ate and drank with us.

And then he suffered and died on the Cross as one of us -

To show us that the way to really live a full and meaningful life -

Is to sacrifice, and to live for others, and to die to our selfishness.

Jesus, in his life and death and resurrection, shows us what sacrifice looks like.

And Doug and Amy Mann have shown us what sacrifice looks like.

Sacrifice looks like a woman cooking unbelievable meals for her husband and her family and friends in a kitchen filled with knives and hot stoves that cannot be seen.

Sacrifice looks like a man driving his wife for years and years to Theta

meetings with the girls at Baylor.

Sacrifice looks like a woman with 3 kidney transplants who sings joyfully at retirement homes in the Musical Therapy group to cheer up the lonely.

Sacrifice looks like a man who stood by his wife's side, arm in arm, leading her up this aisle each Sunday morning to worship their God.

You see, Doug and Amy Mann can see Jesus and his Cross just fine.

In the Gospel of John, Jesus tells the blind man to go to the pool of Siloam and to wash his eyes of the mud.

And then, the blind man is healed.

And I believe that God is inviting each of us today-

To go to the pool of Siloam and to wash *our* eyes of the mud that cakes and clouds our sight.

And when we open our eyes and wipe that dirt off of our face,
Then we will be healed - and we will see this world as Amy saw it.

For when we open our eyes, we will see that there are children in Waco who still cannot read - and who need to be read to.

When we open our eyes, we will see that recognizing a friend's voice from across the room, and a laugh and a smile - can brighten anybody's day.

When we open our eyes, we will see that everyone, *everyone* is loved and beautiful and good-looking in God's sight.

When we open our eyes, we will see God's world, just fine.

So, thank you, Amy.

For I once was blind, but now... I see.

AMEN.